

## HOLDING HANDS—BY GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

*With An Illustration Posed Especially for This Newspaper by Pauline Frederick, Famous Star of "Joseph and His Brethren."*

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At first nobody knew him; then the Hotchkisses knew him, and then it seemed as if everybody had always known him. He was first noticed sitting in the warm corner made by Willcox's annex. Pairs or trios of people, bareheaded, their tennis clothes mostly covered from view by clumsy coonskin coats, passing Willcox's, would break in upon whatever else they have been saying to make such remarks as: "He can't be, or he wouldn't be at Willcox's;" or contradictorily: "He must be, or he'd do something besides sit in the sun;" or, "Don't they always have to drink lots of milk?" or, "Anyway, they're quite positive that it's not catching;" or, "Poor boy, what nice hair he's got."

The suspicion that this interesting young man was a consumptive was set aside by Willcox himself. He told Mrs. Bainbridge that Mr. Masters was recuperating from a very stubborn attack of typhoid. So Mrs. Bainbridge drove out to Miss Langrais' tea at the golf club, and passed on the glad tidings with an addition of circumstantial detail. Mister Masters had been sick for many months at—she thought—the New York Hospital.

Mister Masters never remembered to have passed so lonely and dreary a February. The sunny South was a medicine that had been prescribed and that had to be swallowed. Aiken on the label had looked inviting enough, but he had found the contents of the bottle distasteful in the extreme. "The South is sunny," he wrote to his mother, "but, oh, my

great jumping grandmother, how seldom! And it's cold, mummy, like being beaten with whips. You were right about the people here all being kind; they are all the same kind. I know them all now—by sight; but not by name, except, of course, some who are stopping at Willcox's.

"But in spite of all this there is a truth that must be spoken. I feel a thousand times better and stronger than when I came. I have no one to talk to but your letters. So don't stint me. Stint me with money if you can (here I defy you), but for the love of Heaven keep me posted. If you will promise to write every day I will tell you the name of the prettiest girl in Aiken. She goes by eight times every day, and she looks my way out of the corner of her eye. And I pretend to be reading and try very hardy to look handsome and interesting."

Such was the usual trend of the letters. But that one dated March 7 began with the following astonishing statement:

"I love Aiken. . . ." and went on to explain why.

But Mister Masters was not allowed to love Aiken until he had come through the whole gauntlet of gossip. But finally the real truth about him, or something like it, got out; and the hatchet of suspicion was buried, and there was peace in Aiken.

This was the truth that got out about Mister Masters. He was a nephew of the late Bishop Masters. His mother, on whom he was dependent, was very rich; she had once been prominent in society. He was